

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Commerce Committee

BILL: CS/SB 2570

INTRODUCER: Commerce Committee and Senator Wise

SUBJECT: Early Learning

DATE: April 3, 2009

REVISED: 4/6/09

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Hrdlicka	Cooper	CM	Fav/CS
2.		ED	
3.		CF	
4.		TA	
5.		WPSC	
6.			

Please see Section VIII. for Additional Information:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| A. COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE..... | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> | Statement of Substantial Changes |
| B. AMENDMENTS..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Technical amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Significant amendments were recommended |

I. Summary:

CS/SB 2570 amends Florida's school readiness provisions by:

- Reducing the autonomy of early learning coalitions through increased authority to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI);
- Granting AWI greater rulemaking authority for the administration of the school readiness program in certain areas, including standards, outcome measures, and system support services;
- Reducing the number of early learning coalitions and their membership;
- Increasing the minimum number of children served by each early learning coalition;
- Altering eligibility requirements for the school readiness programs;
- Consolidating provisions that are in disparate sections of the statutes;
- Deleting obsolete references to programs that no longer exist and agencies that no longer direct aspects of school readiness programs; and
- Repealing statutes that administer programs no longer in existence.

This CS substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 39.0121, 39.202, 39.5085, 383.14, 402.26, 402.281, 402.313, 402.315, 402.45, 409.1671, 411.01, 411.0101, 411.0102, 411.0105, 411.203, 411.221, 445.024, 445.030, 490.014, 491.014, 1002.53, 1002.67, 1002.71, and 1009.64.

This CS creates the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 411.01013, 411.01015, 411.0104, and 411.0106.

This CS transfers, renumbers and amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 402.25, 402.3018, 402.3051, and 402.3016.

This CS repeals ss. 402.3135 and 402.3145, F.S.

II. Present Situation:

Florida School Readiness

In 1999, the Legislature passed the School Readiness Act, ch. 99-357, L.O.F., now codified in s. 411.01, F.S. That act integrated several early education programs run by the state Department of Education (DOE) and child care programs run by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) into one system of school readiness delivery. The legislation established a state-level governing board, the Florida Partnership for School Readiness, charged with coordinating statewide program efforts. The act also required that county-level school readiness coalitions be formed to plan, implement and administer the program services locally.

School readiness programs are required to contain, at a minimum, the following elements: developmentally appropriate curriculum, a character development program, an age-appropriate assessment of each child's development, a pretest and posttest administered as children enter and leave programs, an appropriate staff-to-children ratio, a healthful and safe environment, and a resource and referral network that assists parents in making an informed choice of child care providers.¹

2001 Amendments to the School Readiness System

In 2001, the Legislature made several changes to the school readiness system, including the:

- Transfer of the Florida Partnership for School Readiness from the Executive Office of the Governor (EOG) to AWI;²
- Transfer of the subsidized child care program, the prekindergarten early intervention program, the migrant education program, and the Florida First Start Program to AWI;³
- Transfer of the Child Care Executive Partnership and the statewide resource and referral network to AWI;⁴ and
- Designation of AWI as the lead agency for the federal Even Start Family Literacy Programs.⁵

¹ Section 411.01(5)(c)2., F.S.

² Section 16, ch. 2001-170, L.O.F.

³ Sections 17 and 18, ch. 2001-170, L.O.F.

⁴ Section 17, ch. 2001-170, L.O.F.

⁵ Section 19, ch. 2001-170, L.O.F.; s. 411.0105, F.S.

Effective January 1, 2002, the Legislature repealed the sections prescribing program requirements for the Florida First Start Program (former s. 230.2303, F.S. (2000)), the prekindergarten early intervention program (former s. 230.2305, F.S. (2000)), and the subsidized child care program (former s. 402.3015, F.S. (2000)). Additionally in 2002, the program requirements for the migrant education program were repealed.⁶ These repeals marked the end of these former early childhood education and child care programs as separate from the school readiness programs.

2004 Amendments to the School Readiness System

In December 2004, at its 2004 Special Session “A,” the Legislature enacted House Bill 1-A, which created the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, as required by a constitutional amendment adopted by voters in 2002.⁷ In addition to establishing the VPK program, this chapter law enacted several reforms of the school readiness system. The Florida Partnership for School Readiness was abolished on January 2, 2005,⁸ and the partnership’s duties were transferred the AWI. Consequently, the chapter law established that, in addition to responsibility for the operational aspects of the VPK program, AWI is directly responsible for state-level coordination of school readiness programs and of the early learning coalitions.

The chapter law required that, by April 1, 2005, with certain exceptions, each early learning coalition serve at least 2,000 children in the school readiness program or merge with another coalition. This had the effect of reducing the number of coalitions to its current number of 30, although under the current law there could be fewer. The memberships of the coalitions were revised and the chapter law established the prohibition on members from voting when they have a conflict of interest.

The school readiness uniform screening at the time was replaced with a new statewide kindergarten screening to be used for determining whether children entering kindergarten are ready for school. The chapter law required DOE to assign each private prekindergarten provider and public school with a kindergarten readiness rate based upon the results of the kindergarten screening for students completing the provider’s or school’s VPK program.

⁶ Section 1058, ch. 2002-387, L.O.F., repealed former ch. 228, F.S., which included the section prescribing program requirements for migrant education program, former s. 228.062, F.S. (2001).

⁷ Chapter 2004-484, L.O.F. In November 2002, the electors of Florida approved Amendment No. 8 to the State Constitution, which required the Legislature to establish, by the 2005 school year, a prekindergarten program for every 4-year-old child in the state which is voluntary, high quality, free, and delivered according to professionally accepted standards. Section 1(b) and (c), Art. IX of the State Constitution. In 2003, the Legislature enacted s. 1002.53, F.S., as the initial voluntary prekindergarten education program to implement Amendment No. 8.

⁸ House Bill 1-A specified that the Florida Partnership for School Readiness was abolished when the bill became a law (ss. 16(1) and 20, ch. 2004-484, L.O.F.). The Governor approved HB 1-A on January 2, 2005.

2003 and 2004 Review of the School Readiness Program

In 2003 and 2004, the staff of the Committee on Commerce issued two reports on the school readiness programs. The 2003 report, Administration of the School Readiness Programs,⁹ and the 2005 report, School Readiness Programs II: Next Steps in the Evolution of Early Learning,¹⁰ both reviewed the history of school readiness programs in Florida. The 2005 report also surveyed the results of studies regarding such programs and examined ch. 2004-484, L.O.F., to determine what issues, if any, remained outstanding and suggested ways to redress several of those issues. This report offered, in part, the following recommendations:

- Consolidate a number of statutes governing early childhood education and child care;
- Delete obsolete references to repealed and transferred programs;
- Require AWI to publish profiles of school readiness providers (similar to profiles required for VPK program providers) which specify whether the provider complies with the educational requirements of the School Readiness Act;
- Limit financial incentives to providers that comply with the educational requirements of the School Readiness Act;
- Establish an age-distribution policy for School Readiness Funding; and
- Require AWI to develop a comprehensive design of outcome measurements for early learning programs.

2008 Amendments to the School Readiness System

In 2008, two separate sections were transferred and renumbered to be included in ch. 411, F.S.¹¹ These changes corrected obsolete statutory references due to the changes involved in changing early child care and education to the school readiness system.

Section 402.27, F.S. (2007), was renumbered as s. 411.0101, F.S. The child care and early childhood resource and referral network is maintained by AWI, with preference given to the early learning coalitions for the administration of this program. The network helps families identify quality early learning programs by providing information related to the type of program, hours of services, ages of children served, teacher credentials, and other significant program information.

Section 409.178, F.S. (2007), was renumbered as s. 411.0102, F.S. The Child Care Executive Partnership Program is staffed by AWI. The program uses state and federal funds to match local funds derived from various sources, to create community based partnerships with employers and provide child care subsidies to low-income working parents.

School Readiness Funding

School readiness services are funded through a mixture of state and federal funds. The FY 2008-2009 appropriations for grants for services total \$643.7 million, comprised of \$365.8 million from the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grant; \$500,000 from the

⁹ Florida Senate, Committee on Commerce, Economic Opportunities, and Consumer Services, Administration of the School Readiness System, Interim Project Report 2004-116 (Dec. 2003).

¹⁰ Florida Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Services, School Readiness Programs II: Next Steps in the Evolution of Early Learning, Interim Project Report 2005-112 (Jan. 2005).

¹¹ Chapter 2008-196, L.O.F.

Employment Security Administration Trust Fund; \$124.4 million from the Welfare Transition Trust Fund (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant); \$7.5 million from the Employment Security Administration Trust Fund; and \$145.5 million from the state's General Revenue Fund.¹²

AWI is required to develop a formula for the allocation of all state and federal school readiness funds for children participating in public or private school readiness programs based upon equity and performance.¹³ In 2006, the law was changed such that AWI is now required to submit a recommended allocation formula to the Governor and to the Legislature by January 1 of each year, instead of to the Governor and to the Legislative Budget Commission for approval.¹⁴ The Legislature must specify in the General Appropriations Act any changes from the prior year allocation methodology that must be used by AWI in allocating funds to the early learning coalitions.¹⁵

Currently early learning coalitions are responsible for implementing the School Readiness program at the local level. By federal law, the administrative expenditures for this program must be kept below a maximum of 5 percent for each program.¹⁶ The statewide administrative spending for these functions averages 3 percent, or \$18 million dollars, annually. The administrative costs associated with local entities are offset by match requirements from local sources that the state mandates (\$25 million annually).

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

The VPK program is administered at the local level by school districts and school readiness coalitions, called "early learning coalitions." At the state level, DOE administers the accountability requirements of the prekindergarten program and AWI administers the operational requirements of the program.

Currently, to participate in the program, private prekindergarten providers that are not licensed by DCF or Gold Seal Accredited must be accredited by a member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation, the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation, or the Florida Association of Academic Nonpublic Schools. These accreditation associations must have written standards that meet or exceed the state's licensing requirements. Private providers must be a licensed child care facility, a licensed family day care provider, a licensed large family child care home, a nonpublic school exempt from licensure, or a faith-based child care provider exempt from licensure. For each prekindergarten class, there must be at least one instructor that holds a child development associate credential issued by the National Credentialing Program of the Council for Professional Recognition (NCPCPR) or a credential approved by DCF that meets or exceeds the NCPCPR standards. Private providers must offer classes comprised of at least 4 students but no more than 18 students.

¹² Specific Appropriation 2233, General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2008-2009, Chapter 2008-152, L.O.F.

¹³ Section 411.01(9)(c), F.S. The requirement was created by s. 20, ch. 2001-120, L.O.F. It was modified by s. 2 of ch. 2004-484, L.O.F., to make specific reference to the early learning coalitions, to require AWI to "adopt a formula" instead of "prepare a plan," and to make other technical but non-substantive changes in the language.

¹⁴ The criticism was that the statute specified neither the frequency with which AWI was to submit a funding allocation formula to the LBC, nor any date by which it was to be submitted.

¹⁵ Chapters 2006-17 and 2006-26 (ss. 40, 41), L.O.F.

¹⁶ 45 CFR 98.50(d).

Public providers must be a part of a school district that has met classroom size requirements pursuant to the State Constitution and has sufficient facilities and capital outlay funds to continue reducing the average class size in elementary schools each year in accordance with the schedule for class size reduction to achieve full compliance with the maximum class sizes in s. 1(a), Art. IX of the State Constitution, by the 2010-2011 school year. The Commissioner of Education must certify that the school district has met or is on pace to meet all requirements.

For public and private providers, each prekindergarten instructor must submit to level 2 background screenings every 5 years, which includes fingerprinting procedures for employees who have had a break in continuous employment of more than 90 days.

If an approved prekindergarten instructor is absent, present law requires the provider to hire another credentialed instructor as a substitute. For shorter periods of time, a substitute instructor who does not meet the VPK instructor qualifications may be used.

Early Learning Coalitions

Early learning coalitions are, in general, community agencies incorporated as private, not-for-profit organizations. They implement the school readiness program and provide the certain family services. The early learning coalitions also assist in the implementation of the VPK program. The coalitions:¹⁷

- Accept applications for VPK through a single point of entry for all coalitions;
- Determine eligibility for participation;
- Provide parents with a profile of every private prekindergarten provider or public school delivering the program within the coalition's county or multicounty region;
- Enroll children in the program by working with each school district in the coalition's area;
- Ensure that appropriate staff-to-children ratios are maintained; and
- Ensure that children are enrolled with an eligible providers.

Furthermore, the early learning coalitions also have the responsibility to administer the VPK program at the county or regional level for students enrolled in a summer program delivered by a private prekindergarten provider.¹⁸

The early learning coalitions are responsible for implementing the educational requirements of both the School Readiness and VPK programs. Program expectations that are part of the School Readiness Act, include:

- The program must enhance the age-appropriate progress of each child in the development of school readiness skills, including self-help skills, compliance with rules, and problem solving skills;¹⁹
- The early learning coalition must implement a comprehensive program of School Readiness services that enhance the cognitive, social, and physical development of children to achieve the performance standards and outcome measures adopted by AWI;²⁰

¹⁷ Sections 1002.53 and 1002.67, F.S.

¹⁸ Section 1002.61, F.S.

¹⁹ Sections 411.01(4)(j) and 411.01(5)(c)1.a., F.S.

²⁰ Section 411.01(5)(c)2., F.S.

- The program must provide extended-day and extended-year services to meet the needs of parents who work;²¹
- There must be coordinated staff development and teaching opportunities;²²
- There must be expanded access to community services and resources for families to help achieve economic self-sufficiency;²³
- The program must meet all state licensing guidelines, where applicable;²⁴
- Instructional staff must have completed the training course as required in s. 402.305(2)(d)1., F.S., or have had additional training or credentials as required by AWI.²⁵

Currently children ages birth to five, as well as school age children up to the age of 13, children up to the age of 19 if there is a documented physical or mental incapacity, and children under the Relative Caregiver Program,²⁶ are served in the school readiness program.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 2570 proposes several changes to the existing regulatory framework for school readiness and early learning coalitions. The CS deletes obsolete references to the subsidized child care program and to the State Coordinating Council for School Readiness Programs. Programs related to school readiness located in other chapters of the Florida Statutes are moved to Part I, ch. 411, F.S., dealing with school readiness. Further, the CS seeks to bring uniform and centralized administration of the early learning coalitions under AWI. Each proposed change is discussed separately below.

Section 1 amends s. 39.0121, F.S., which deals with rulemaking authority for DCF in proceedings related to children. The CS deletes an obsolete reference to the repealed subsidized child care program in subsection (7).

Section 2 amends s. 39.202, F.S., relating to reports and records in cases of child abuse or neglect. This section replaces a reference to “subsidized child care” and replaces it with “school readiness” for certain records available to certain persons of DCF, the Department of Health, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, or county agencies in cases of child abuse or neglect.

Section 3 amends s. 39.5085, F.S., related to the Relative Caregiver Program, which is established and operated by DCF. This section deletes a reference to the repealed subsidized child care program in subsection (2)(f).

Section 4 amends s. 383.14, F.S., which deals with Department of Health screening programs for metabolic disorders, other hereditary and congenital disorders, and environmental risk factors for all newborns in Florida. This section replaces obsolete references to the former State

²¹ Section 411.01(5)(c)1.b., F.S.

²² Section 411.01(5)(c)1.c., F.S.

²³ Section 411.01(5)(c)1.d., F.S.

²⁴ Section 411.01(5)(c)1.h., F.S.

²⁵ Section 411.01(5)(d)4.c., F.S.

²⁶ Section 39.5085, F.S.

Coordinating Council for School Readiness Programs with updated references to AWI in subsections (1)(b) and (2).²⁷

Section 5 transfers, renumbers, and amends s. 402.25, F.S., which directs each state funded education and care program for children from birth to 5 years of age to provide activities to foster brain development in infants and toddlers. Section 402.25, F.S., is renumbered as s. 411.0106, F.S. It adds a requirement that the program provide an environment that helps children attain the performance standards adopted by AWI pursuant to s. 411.01(4)(d)8., F.S. This section also deletes and replaces references to the repealed subsidized child care program, prekindergarten early intervention program, and Florida First Start Program with a reference to the school readiness program.

Section 6 amends s. 402.26, F.S., which sets forth the Legislature's intent for child care programs in Florida. This section deletes a reference to "subsidized child care system" and replaces it with "early learning programs" in subsection (5), related to the development of child care opportunities for children at risk, economically disadvantaged children, and other children traditionally disenfranchised from society.

Section 7 amends s. 402.281, F.S., related to the Gold Seal Quality Care Program administered by the DCF. This section adds a reference that would require DCF to consult with AWI regarding the approval of accrediting associations for the Gold Seal Quality Care program. It deletes a reference to the former State Coordinating Council for School Readiness Programs.

Section 8 transfers, renumbers, and amends s. 402.3018, F.S., as s. 411.01015, F.S., to reflect the transfer of early learning responsibilities from DCF to AWI and the evolution of child care to school readiness and prekindergarten services. This section revises provisions requiring, subject to legislative appropriation, the establishment of a statewide toll-free Warm-Line, providing assistance and consultation to child development providers regarding health, developmental, disability, and special needs issues. This section revises the purpose of the Warm-Line, specifying that the purpose is to provide advice to child care personnel concerning strategies, curriculum, and environmental adaptations for children with a disability or special need.

Under current law, DCF is required to contract with the "statewide resource information and referral agency" for the Warm-Line. Resource and referral was transferred to AWI from DCF,²⁸ but the statute did not accurately reflect that change. This section specifies that AWI, not DCF, is the agency responsible for the Warm-Line. AWI is directed to annually inform child care centers and family day care homes about the Warm-Line through the child care resource and referral network under s. 411.0101, F.S. AWI is also directed to contract or expand the Warm-Line such that at least one Warm-Line is maintained in each early learning coalition area.

²⁷ Section 5, ch. 2000-149, provides that "[e]ffective July 1, 2000, no state funding shall be provided to support activities of the State Coordinating Council for School Readiness Services established pursuant to section 411.222(4), Florida Statutes." As amended by s. 13, ch. 2000-337, s. 411.222(4) was redesignated as s. 411.222(1)-(6). Section 411.222, F.S., was repealed July 1, 2002, by s. 7, ch. 99-357. See s. 411.222, F.S. (2000).

²⁸ Section 17, ch. 2001-170, L.O.F.

Section 9 transfers, renumbers, and amends s. 402.3051, F.S., as s. 411.01013, F.S., to address reimbursement rates. Under the former subsidized child care program, DCF determined reimbursement rates for child care services across the state. In 1999, under the School Readiness Act, the authority to set reimbursement rates was devolved to school readiness coalitions.²⁹ Under federal regulations governing the Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant, which provides more than one-half of the funding for the state's school readiness programs, the state must demonstrate "[h]ow payment rates are adequate based on a local market rate survey..."³⁰ Although s. 402.3051, F.S., has not been revised since responsibility for determining reimbursement rates was transferred to the school readiness coalitions, AWI has contracted for the market rate survey partially based on the instructions for collection of market-rate data and calculation of the prevailing market rate described in s. 402.3051, F.S.

This section replaces obsolete provisions relating to the state-level determination of reimbursement rates with provisions requiring AWI to establish a prevailing market-rate schedule with county-by-county rates. Rates are differentiated for child care providers with a Gold Seal Quality Care designation and those without one. Currently, each early learning coalition is authorized, through procedures adopted by AWI, to negotiate to pay Gold Seal Quality Care providers up to a maximum of a 20 percent differential over the coalition's adopted provider reimbursement rate. The rate for FY 2007-08 was on average 15 percent, and \$26.3 million in Gold Seal payments were made to school readiness providers from federal funds received through the Child Care and Development Fund. This section specifies that the rate paid to Gold Seal providers is the prevailing market rate plus a Gold Seal Quality Care maximum rate.

This section also:

- Deletes a provision specifying that the prevailing market rate is based on the prices charged for child development services only by licensed providers, thereby reflecting AWI's current practice that the market-rate survey also encompasses unlicensed providers;
- Requires the prevailing market-rate schedule to differentiate rates based on the type of child care provider, types of services provided, full-time and part-time services, and the number of children in a single family;
- However, the prevailing market rate must be based exclusively on the prices charged for child care services;
- Prohibits the schedule from interfering with parental choice of child care provides;
- Authorizes AWI to contract with one or more qualified entities to administer these provisions and provide technical support; and
- Allows AWI to adopt rules to administer this section.

Section 10 amends s. 402.313, F.S., dealing with family home daycares. This section deletes references to the repealed subsidized child care program, including obsolete provisions authorizing DCF to license family day care homes participating in the repealed program.

²⁹ Section 1, ch. 99-357, L.O.F.; s. 411.01(5)(e)2., F.S.

³⁰ 45 C.F.R. s. 98.43(b)(2).

Section 11 amends s. 402.315, F.S., related to fees collected for licensing and registration of certain facilities by DCF.

Currently, s. 402.315, F.S., sets a license fee for child care facilities licensed under s. 402.308, F.S., that is \$1 per child, with the minimum fee set at \$25 and the maximum fee set at \$100 per facility. Section 402.308, F.S., states that “every child care facility in the state shall have a license which shall be renewed annually.”

This section adds fees for licensing and registration for different types of child care:

- For child care facilities licensed pursuant to s. 402.305, the fee is \$1 per child based on the licensed capacity of the facility, with a minimum fee set at \$25 and a maximum fee set at \$100 per facility.³¹
- For family day care homes registered with DCF pursuant to s. 402.313, F.S., the fee is \$25. Currently, family day care homes are registered with DCF if they are not subject to licensure.
- For family day care homes licensed pursuant to s. 402.313, F.S., the fee is \$50. As changed by Section 10 of the CS, family day care home are licensed pursuant to s. 402.313, F.S., if they are presently being licensed under an existing county licensing ordinance or if the board of county commissioners passes a resolution that family day care homes be license.
- For large family child care homes licensed under s. 402.3131, F.S., the fee is \$60. Large family child care homes are occupied residences in which child care is regularly provided for children from at least two unrelated families.

Section 12 amends s. 402.45, F.S., which directs the Department of Health to establish a community resource mother or father program, the purpose of which is to demonstrate the benefits of utilizing community resource for children to mothers or fathers. This section deletes a reference to the former State Coordinating Council for School Readiness Programs and replaces it with AWI, such that individuals contracted to administer these programs will be trained as determined by the Department of Health in consultation with AWI.

Section 13 amends s. 409.1671, F.S., relating to foster care and related services. This section clarifies that a licensed foster home may be dually licensed as a child care facility and also receive certain payments for the same child.

Section 14 amends s. 411.01, F.S., the School Readiness Act. This section revises the legislative intent by:

- Changing the intent that school readiness programs involve “parents” as a child’s first teacher to “parent.”
- Deleting the intent that school readiness programs be regionally designed, operated and managed with AWI developing the program’s performance standards, outcome measures, and approving and reviewing coalitions’ and their plans.
- Deleting the intent related to appropriations for combined school readiness programs.

³¹ Section 402.305, F.S., sets out the licensing standards for child care facilities in Florida, including personnel requirements, staff-to-children ratios, and building standards.

- Deleting the intent that the federal child care income tax credit be preserved for school readiness programs.

This section amends subsection (4), related to AWI's participation in the school readiness program, by making clarifying changes, including:

- Directing AWI to coordinate with the early learning coalitions, instead of directing them;
- Designating that AWI is, rather than may be, designated by the Governor as the lead agency for the federal Child Care and Development Fund;³²
- Directing AWI to provide a review every 2 years of the early learning coalitions and school readiness plans;
- Directing AWI to establish a unified approach to school readiness and adopt specific "system support service" strategies;
 - "System support service" strategies may include, but are not limited to:
 - Child care resource and referral services;
 - Warm-Line services;
 - Eligibility determinations;
 - Child performance standards;
 - Child screening and assessment;
 - Developmentally appropriate curricula;
 - Health and safety requirements;
 - Statewide data system requirements; and
 - Rating and improving systems.
- Directing the early learning coalitions to amend their school readiness plans to conform to AWI's specific "system support service" strategies adopted;
- Directing AWI to adopt a rule establishing criteria for expending funds to improve the quality of child care in Florida in accordance with s. 658G of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant;
 - Including rules to establish criteria by which coalitions may implement locally developed quality programs, which require that the coalition demonstrate that it solicited and received comments regarding their proposed quality program from the local community and that implementation of the program conforms to the coalition's school readiness plan;
- Directing AWI to provide technical assistance to the coalitions based on information obtained from public input, government reports, private interest group reports, and coalition requests for service;
- Deleting the requirement for AWI to address gaps in service;
- Deleting the requirement for AWI to provide technical assistance to counties that form a multicounty region to be serviced by a coalition;
- Increasing the age, from 3 to 5, which AWI's performance standards must be integrated with DOE's standards for VPK;
- Allowing AWI to adopt rules for child performance standards, outcome measures, and the implementation of the federal Child Care and Development Fund Plan;³³

³² According to AWI, the agency explicitly authorized to administer early childhood services and the school readiness program has always been designated as the lead agency for the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Because AWI administers these services and programs, AWI must be the designated agency and no other agency can be the lead agency for purposes of administering the federal fund.

- Adding a requirement that within 30 days after enrollment, the coalition or program provider should obtain certain information regarding the child's health history;
- Directing AWI to conduct studies and planning activities related to specific system support service strategies for school readiness adopted by AWI;
- Deleting the requirement for AWI to identify best practices of early learning coalitions; and
- Deleting the requirement for AWI to provide, or make available, an annual report to the Florida Healthy Kids Corporation, the State Board of Education, district school boards, central agencies, and county health departments.

This section revises parts of s. 411.01(5)(a), F.S. It reduces the number of coalitions from 30 to 20, and increases the minimum number of children served from 2,000 to 3,000. The merger of coalitions to meet this decreased number must be done by July 1, 2010; the transfer of powers, duties, personnel, and the like, must be done by October 1, 2010. In addition, each coalition must manage the transfer or discharge of all contractual obligations.

Currently, s. 411.01(5)(a)3., F.S., states that coalitions in Sarasota, Osceola, and Santa Rosa counties are not to be counted within the limit of 30 coalitions. This provision is deleted. In essence, the number of coalitions is reduced from 33 to 20. There are currently 31 early learning coalitions in Florida.

This section reduces the number of members that each early learning coalition may have from 18 – 35 down to 15 – 25 members, with no more than 18 voting members. The coalition no longer must have the county health department director as a member, a member appointed by the county commission, or the central agency administrator as a member. Further the district superintendent of schools, the children's services council or juvenile welfare board chair or executive director, the Head Start director, the representative of private child care providers, and representative of faith-based child care provides are changed from non-voting to voting members of the coalition. The regional workforce board director is changed to a non-voting member.³⁴ Currently the Governor appoints three members to each coalition; the revised language limits his appointment to one person.

This section adds language such that the coalition chair, appointed by the Governor, will be appointed for 4 years in conjunction with their membership of the Early Learning Advisory Council under s. 20.052, F.S. The Early Learning Advisory Council was established under s. 1002.77, F.S., to submit recommendations to DOE and AWI on the early learning policy of this state, including recommendations relating to administration of VPK and the school readiness programs. Section 20.052, F.S., sets forth the requirements for how advisory bodies are established, evaluated, or maintained; this includes requirements as to how private citizens are appointed to advisory bodies.

³³ This program, authorized by the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, and Section 418 of the Social Security Act, assists low-income families, families receiving temporary public assistance, and those transitioning from public assistance in obtaining child care so they can work or attend training/education. About the Child Care Development Fund, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/ccdf/index.htm> (last visited 3/26/2009).

³⁴ The only other required non-voting member is the representative of programs for children with disabilities under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

This section repeals the current subsection (5)(b), which discusses program participation.

This section adds a new subsection (5)(b), related to limitations on early learning coalitions. The coalitions may not impose requirements on a child care or early childhood education provider that does not deliver services under the school readiness program or receive funds under s. 411.01, F.S.

This section adds a requirement under subsection (5)(c) for AWI to establish “through technology” a single statewide information system that each coalition must use to manage the single point of entry, tracking children’s progress, coordinating services among stakeholders, determining eligibility, tracking child attendance, and streamlining administrative processes for provides and early learning coalitions.

This section adds a requirement under subsection (5)(c) that the school readiness program must ensure that minimum standards for child discipline practices are age appropriate, are not severe, humiliating, or frightening, and are not associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited.³⁵

This section also adds language under subsection (5)(c) for each early learning coalition to implement a comprehensive program of school readiness services in accordance with rules adopted by AWI. The statute currently provides the minimum elements that the program must address; these minimum requirements are increased by adding that the program must include:

- An appropriate staff-to-children ratio that, when applicable, meets the required ratios for licensed child care facilities and family day care homes, and is verified pursuant to s. 402.311, F.S.³⁶
- An age-appropriate assessment administered when children enter and leave the program.
- A resource and referral network established under s. 411.0101, F.S., to assist parents and “a regional warm line under s. 411.01015, F.S.”³⁷

This section adds a requirement under subsection (5)(d) for early learning coalitions to coordinate with one another to implement a comprehensive program of school readiness services to serve specific purposes for children and families in addition to previously required criteria. Previously this section directed each coalition individually to develop a plan to implement the criteria. New criteria include demonstration of how the plan ensure that each child from birth to 5 years of age, instead of 3 and 4 year olds, receives services meeting AWI performance standards, helping families achieve economic self sufficiency and reducing agency duplication. AWI is also directed to review the school readiness plans at least every 2 years (current language requires a review by AWI at least once a year).

³⁵ See s. 402.305(12), F.S.

³⁶ Section 402.311, F.S., sets forth the right to inspection of licensed child care facilities by DCF or a local licensing agency. The right of entry and inspection is also extended to any premises which DCF or the local licensing agency has reason to believe are being operated or maintained as a child care facility without a license, subject to permission by the owner or a warrant issued by a circuit court.

³⁷ See analysis of section 9 of the bill above, and section 15 of the bill later in this analysis.

This section amends the requirements for coalition school readiness plans, including that the plan be consistent with AWI system support services, and address:

- The needs of all eligible providers and children in the coalition's area;
- Additional training for instructional staff;
- Systems support services that include statewide quality assurance policies, and meet the needs of unique populations, such as migratory agriculture workers;
- Enhancement services to families, including parent training and involvement activities that meet the needs of unique populations and local eligibility priorities; and
- The implementation of locally developed quality programs in accordance with AWI requirements adopted pursuant to s. 411.01(4)(d)5. (addressed above).

This section repeals requirements for coalition school readiness plans, including criteria that address systems support services, including a central agency, child care resource and referral, eligibility determinations, training of providers, and parent support (most of these are addressed elsewhere in the statutes, either currently or through changes made by this CS).

Currently, each early learning coalition is responsible for identifying local needs and applying appropriate solutions as local entities; the early learning coalitions have discretion in their day-to-day operations. The federal government and state establish guidelines, and the early learning coalitions develop quality initiatives based on a local needs assessment as part of the coalition plan. This allows early learning coalitions to measure the level of achievement and impact their services have on their communities.

An early learning coalition will no longer be able to petition AWI for waiver of meeting the agency's rules when the coalition demonstrates that specific statutory goals may be achieved more effectively in another way. Additionally, AWI, not the early learning coalitions, may petition the Governor and Cabinet to waive any provisions of ss. 411.223,³⁸ 411.232,³⁹ or 1003.54,⁴⁰ F.S., if the waiver is necessary to implement the school readiness program.

This section also deletes an obsolete provision in s. 411.01(5)(d)9., F.S. Because all federal subsidized child-care programs in Florida have been consolidated into the Florida School Readiness program, it is unnecessary to retain this reference. Those programs included: the Prekindergarten Intervention Program; the Migrant Education Program; subsidized child care; and Florida First Start.

This section changes the way the coalitions may procure commodities or contractual services. Currently the coalitions may submit requests for proposals pursuant to s. 287.054, F.S. Under the CS, early learning coalitions must comply with the procurement and expenditure procedures developed by AWI. Further, paragraph (5)(e) of s. 411.01, F.S., is amended to include a reference created in section 10 of this CS.

³⁸ Addresses uniform standards for preschool preventative health services.

³⁹ Establishes the Children's Early Investment Program for young children who are at risk of developmental dysfunction or delay and for their families.

⁴⁰ Establishes teenage parent programs by each district school board.

This section repeals s. 411.01(5)(f), F.S. This subsection dealt with requirements related to fiscal agents.

This section also amends current subsection (5)(g),⁴¹ requiring each early learning coalition to prepare an annual report that includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of its direct enhancement services.

This section amends subsection (6) of s. 411.01, F.S., to clearly define the group of children eligible for the school readiness program. Currently the law states that the school readiness program is established for children from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school. The new language adds that the program is also established for children who are eligible for any federal subsidized child care program. AWI stated that this is not an increase in the number of eligible children served, but language necessary to protect TANF funding. Children eligible for federal subsidized child care programs include school aged children up to 13 years of age, and disabled children up to 19 years of age. These children are currently served by the school readiness program, as discussed above in the Present Situation.

Currently, subsection (11) of s. 401.01, F.S., grants priority admissions in the school readiness program to children from the temporary assistance to needy families (TANF) program. Subsection (6) specifies that second priority is given to pre-school children (3-5 years old) who are served by the Family Safety Program Office of DCF, or similar local program. Subsequent priority is determined by the local coalition, provided that the children meet the qualifications set forth in subsection (6), and are pre-school-aged.

This section of the CS further amends subsection (6) of s. 411.01, F.S., to establish a definitive priority sequence for admissions to school readiness programs. First, subsection (11) is repealed; instead first priority is given to a child from a family in which there is an adult receiving temporary cash assistance who is subject to federal work requirements.

Second priority is given to children who are eligible for a school readiness program but have not entered school and are served by the Family Safety Program Office of DCF, or similar local program, including those children being served by a community based lead agency under ch. 409, F.S. (social and economic assistance, including children's zones). Using the eligibility categories in current law, subsequent priority is established as follows:

- Children under the age of kindergarten eligibility who are:
 - Children at risk of welfare dependency, including economically disadvantaged children, children of participants in the welfare transition program, children of migrant farmworkers, and children of teen parents;
 - Children of working families whose family is economically disadvantaged; and
 - Children for whom the state is paying a relative caregiver payment under s. 39.5085, F.S.
- Three-year-old children and 4-year-old children who may not be economically disadvantaged but who have disabilities, have been served in a specific part-time or combination of part-time exceptional education programs with required special services,

⁴¹ Subsection (5)(g) becomes (5)(f) with the repeal of current subsection (5)(f).

- aids, or equipment, and were previously reported for funding part time with the Florida Education Finance Program as exceptional students.
- Economically disadvantaged children, children with disabilities, or children at risk of future school failure, from birth to 4 years of age, who are served at home through home visitor programs and intensive parent education programs.
 - Children who meet federal and state eligibility requirements for the migrant preschool program but who are not economically disadvantaged.

Children who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation and are current clients of the Family Safety Program Office of DCF are removed from priority eligibility.

This section revises provisions related to parental choice in s. 411.01(7), F.S. This section adds a definition for “payment certificate” as a child care certificate defined in 45 C.F.R. s. 98.2.⁴² The defined term replaces “purchase service order” throughout the section. The school readiness program is required to be administered in accordance with 45 C.F.R. s. 98.30, which deals with federal requirements for parental choice in child care services.

This section revises subsection (8) to require that all program providers participating in the school readiness program meet the performance standards and outcomes adopted by AWI.

This section revises provisions related to funding of the school readiness program in s. 411.01(9), F.S. AWI must establish a formula for allocation of state and federal school readiness funds subject to legislative notice and review under s. 216.177, F.S.⁴³ This formula will be based on equity “for each county.” This section eliminates requirements for AWI to submit recommendations to the Legislature for providing necessary transportation services for school readiness programs.

Section 15 amends s. 411.0101, F.S., by revising requirements for services provided by the statewide child care resource and referral network. In particular referrals will only be made to “legally operating” child care facilities; no referrals will be made to facilities operating illegally. The current law states that referrals will only be made to licensed child care facilities and no referrals will be made to unlicensed facilities. This change incorporates programs which are legally operating but that are not required to be licensed to be included in the referral network; this would include faith-based facilities.

The language also specifies that the network is established by AWI as a part of the school readiness program. AWI is directed to adopt rules regarding the accessibility of the network, which include required hours of operation, methods for parents to request services, and network staff requirements.

⁴² The federal law defines “child care certificate” as “means a certificate (that may be a check, or other disbursement) that is issued by a grantee directly to a parent who may use such certificate only as payment for child care services or as a deposit for child care services if such a deposit is required of other children being cared for by the provider, pursuant to §98.30. Nothing in this part shall preclude the use of such certificate for sectarian child care services if freely chosen by the parent. For the purposes of this part, a child care certificate is assistance to the parent, not assistance to the provider.”

⁴³ Dealing with appropriations acts of the Legislature.

The agencies implementing the network are required to develop a resource file of existing public and private child care and early childhood education services through the single statewide information system developed by AWI pursuant to s. 411.01, F.S., as discussed above in Section 14. Additionally, agencies are to keep a record of requests for service “tabulated through the internal referral process through the single statewide information system”.

The referral program is now referenced as the “network” and appropriate changes are made throughout the statute to reflect this. References to repealed programs are deleted and changed to current programs, such as VPK and the school readiness program. Additionally references to “handicapped” are changed to refer to children with disabilities.

Section 16 amends s. 411.0102, F.S., revising provisions relating to the Child Care Executive Partnership Act. This section deletes and replaces references to subsidized child care with appropriate language.

Currently, the early learning coalitions must establish a community child care task force for each child care purchasing pool. The task force is required to be made up of certain persons, who the early learning coalition must recruit from existing child care councils, commissions, or other task forces operating in the area of a purchasing pool. Each task force is directed to develop a plan for the use of child care purchasing pool funds. This language is deleted by the CS; the early learning coalition board is directed to develop them plan for the child care purchasing pool funds.

This section adds language to subsection (4)(b) to allow the Child Care Executive Partnership to conduct meetings through telecommunications.

Section 17 amends s. 411.0105, F.S., related to federal acts and programs in early learning and childcare areas. This section designates AWI as the lead agency for purposes of the Early Learning Opportunities Act, 20 U.S.C. ss. 9401-9413.⁴⁴ This section changes the designation of lead agency for the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs, 20 U.S.C. ss. 6381-6381K, from AWI to DOE.⁴⁵ DOE is directed to contract with AWI for administration of this federal program.

Currently, s. 411.01(4)(c), F.S., authorizes the Governor to designate AWI as the lead agency for the federal Child Care and Development Fund. In addition, current law designates AWI as the lead agency for the federal Early Learning Opportunities Act and the Even Start Family Literacy Programs.⁴⁶ In 2001, the United States Congress designated the Even Start Family Literacy Programs as the “William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs” and specified that

⁴⁴ The Early Learning Opportunities Act (ELOA) was passed by Congress to award grants to states to enable them to increase, support, expand, and better coordinate early learning opportunities for children and their families through local community. Grants are issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

⁴⁵ William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs offers grants to support local family literacy projects that integrate early childhood education, adult literacy (adult basic and secondary-level education and instruction for English language learners), parenting education, and interactive parent and child literacy activities for low-income families with parents who are eligible for services under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and their children from birth through age 7. Teen parents and their children from birth through age 7 also are eligible. U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Education, Even Start, at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/evenstartformula/index.html> (last visited 3/26/2009).

⁴⁶ Section 411.0105, F.S.

federal grants awarded to a state under those federal programs must be administered by the state educational agency.⁴⁷ In deference to federal law, DOE complies with the lead agency responsibilities under federal law, and AWI administers the programs under an interagency agreement with the department.

Section 18 amends s. 411.203, F.S., dealing with the continuum of comprehensive services. This section deletes references to the repealed subsidized child care program.

Section 19 amends s. 411.221, F.S., related to prevention and early assistance strategic plan and agency responsibilities. This section deletes a reference to the former State Coordinating Council for School Readiness Programs and replaces it with AWI.

Section 20 amends ss. 445.024(4), F.S., related to prioritization of work requirements for regional workforce boards. This section deletes a reference to subsidized child care.⁴⁸

Section 21 amends s. 445.030, F.S., related to transitional education and training for former recipients of temporary cash assistance who are actively seeking work or working. This section deletes a reference to subsidized child care.

Section 22 amends s. 490.014(2), F.S., related to exemptions for state licensure as psychologists. This section deletes references to the subsidized child care program and fixes a reference to the child care resource and referral network to the current statute.

Section 23 amends s. 491.014, F.S., related to state licensure for clinical, counseling, and psychotherapy services. This section deletes references to the subsidized child care program and fixes a reference to the child care resource and referral network to the current statute.

Section 24 amends 1002.53, F.S., related to VPK, to conform subsection (5) of this statute to the changes made to the early learning coalitions.

This section adds language to the VPK program that a provider's disciplinary policies must prohibit discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening, is associated with food, rest, or toileting, or involves spanking or other physical punishment.

Section 25 amends 1002.67, F.S., related to VPK, to conform subparagraph (3)(c)4. of this statute to the changes made to the early learning coalitions.

Section 26 amends s. 1002.71, F.S., to make a technical change in subsection (6) of the statute.

Section 27 amends s. 1009.64, F.S., to delete a reference to subsidized child care.

⁴⁷ No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425, 1555 (2002) (codified at 20 U.S.C. ss. 6381-6381k).

⁴⁸ This reference was added by ch. 2007-197, L.O.F., as part of a change to align the statute with the federal TANF law.

Section 28 repeals ss. 402.3135 and 402.3145, F.S., relating to the subsidized child care program case management program and the subsidized child care transportation program. The subsidized child care program was repealed in 2002.⁴⁹

Section 29 transfers and renumbers s. 402.3016, F.S., to s. 411.0104, F.S. This statute relates to Early Head Start collaboration grants, which AWI administers a program to assist local agencies in securing.

Section 30 provides an effective date of July 1, 2009.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The CS updates the statutes to reflect the current organizational structure of the school readiness system and clarifies obsolete and vague laws relating to child development. These changes may reduce potential confusion, may improve the effectiveness of school readiness coalitions by administering a uniform program state-wide, and may promote consistency in the regulation of child development providers.

Changes in the school readiness program may also result in an increase in the number of facilities eligible to participate as well as an increase in the number of children eligible.

C. Government Sector Impact:

This CS may require short-term workload increases for AWI associated with reviewing and updating existing administrative rules and associated forms used to administer school readiness programs.

⁴⁹ Chapter 2001-170, L.O.F.

Reduction in the number of early learning coalitions will most likely result in a decrease in annual expenditures by AWI for this program.

AWI has estimated that to establish and deploy a single statewide information system for use by all early learning coalitions, as required by the CS, will cost about \$23.7 million over 3 years.

DCF indicated that the bill as filed would have no fiscal impact on their operations.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

AWI identified several issues in its original analysis that were not addressed by the CS:

- Section 411.0101, F.S., does not include the same confidentiality protections for children's personal information as do ss. 411.011 and 1002.72, F.S.
- Under the proposed revisions, AWI is required to establish a unified approach to enhancement of school readiness and is permitted to adopt rules in support of that effort. Coalitions are required to amend their school readiness plans to comply with such rules. The bill fails to indicate how coalitions are required to operate if AWI exercises its discretion to not adopt rules.

DCF identified the following issues in its analysis of the original bill, and were not addressed by the CS:

- Section 39.5085(2)(f), F.S., is amended to remove an obsolete reference to the repealed subsidized child care program; however, the bill does not replace the obsolete terminology with a reference to the school readiness program (consistent with the way s. 39.202, F.S., is amended).
- Section 409.1671, F.S., includes terminology ("out-of-home care payment") that is not consistent with Federal terminology ("foster care maintenance payment"). The department recommends that this reference be revised to conform to the Federal terminology. In addition, current law inaccurately refers to foster homes "licensed under this section." Foster homes are licensed under s. 409.175, F.S.

The CS clarifies the appropriate staff-to-children ration in s. 411.01(5)(c)2.e., F.S., by adding references to such requirements for licensed child care facilities and family day care homes as applicable. However, the new language states that this ratio is appropriate "as verified pursuant to s. 402.311." Section 402.311, F.S., does not provide for verification, but instead discusses the right to inspection of licensed child care facilities by DCF or a local licensing agency. It may be more appropriate to refer to an inspection rather than verification, as appropriate.

VIII. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)**CS by the Commerce Committee on April 1, 2009:**

The committee substitute:

- Addresses a concern of AWI by amending references throughout the bill from “the school readiness program” to “school readiness programs.”
- Removes the proposed change to reduce Miami-Dade’s children’s services governing board membership, from 33 to 20.
- Requires that at least 1 “Warm-Line” be maintained in each early learning coalition service area and clarifies that AWI should annually inform child care facilities of the Warm-Line through the resource and referral network under s. 411.0101, F.S.
- Clarifies that the Warm-Line is for a child with a disability or special need.
- Removes proposed requirement that the differential for the maximum rate (differential) for Gold Seal providers be set by the General Appropriations Act.
- Adds licensing and registration fees imposed by DCF for these facilities:
 - Family day care homes registered pursuant s. 402.313, F.S. = \$25;
 - Family day care homes licensed pursuant to s. 402.313, F.S. = \$50;
 - Large family child care homes licensed pursuant to s. 402.3131 = \$60.
- Removes proposal for the administration of services for children through the early learning coalitions and the original language to for AWI to coordinate with the early learning coalitions is restored.
- Directs AWI to adopt system support service strategies for the school readiness programs. These include:
 - Child care resource and referral services;
 - Warm-Line services;
 - Eligibility determinations;
 - Child performance standards;
 - Child screening and assessment;
 - Developmental appropriate curricula;
 - Health and safety requirements;
 - Statewide data system requirements; and
 - Rating and improving systems.
- Directs AWI to adopt rules for establishing criteria to use funds in accordance with the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant. The rule shall establish criteria by which coalitions may implement locally developed quality programs, including the requirement that the coalition demonstrate that it solicited and received comments regarding their proposed quality program from the local community and implementation of the program conforms to the coalition’s school readiness plan.
- Removes the proposed rulemaking authority for AWI for the administration of assessment for School Readiness Children, parent eligibility processes, and child care resource and referral (rulemaking authority moved to s. 411.0101, F.S., which deals with the network).
- Changes the deadline requirement for the proposed reduction in the number of early learning coalitions, from April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2010, and must transfer powers and

duties by October 1, 2010. Early learning coalitions must also ensure the transfer or discharge of all contractual obligations.

- Increase the number of members for the early learning coalition to 15 to 25, rather than 10 to 20 members, with no more than 18 voting members. The district superintendent of schools, the children services council or juvenile welfare board chair or executive director, and the Head Start director are designated as voting members. The regional workforce board director is changed to a non-voting member.
- Deletes section on program participation, which generally defined how the school readiness program was administered by AWI through the early learning coalitions.
- Adds section defining limitations on coalitions, clarifying that the coalitions may not impose requirements on providers who do not deliver services under the school readiness programs or receive funding under this section.
- The school readiness program must ensure that minimum standards for child discipline practices are age appropriate; are not severe, humiliating, or frightening; and are not associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking is prohibited.
- Pretests and posttests for children entering and leaving the program are re-termed as “age appropriate assessments.”
- Each early learning coalition’s plan must demonstrate how the program will ensure that each child from birth through 5 years of age receives activities and instruction (this is an increase in ages from just 3 to 4 years of age).
- Each early learning coalition must prepare an annual report that includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of its direct enhancement services.
- Expands second priority to those children being served by a community based lead agency under ch. 409, F.S. (social and economic assistance, including children’s zones).
- Removes priority for children at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- Allows the Child Care Executive Partnership to conduct meetings through telecommunications.
- Add language to VPK program that a provider’s disciplinary policies must prohibit discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening, is associated with food, rest, or toileting, or involves spanking or other physical punishment.

B. Amendments:

None.